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## **U.S. Postal Service Mail Carrier Sentenced to More Than Eight Years in Prison in Stolen Identity Tax Refund Scheme**

A U.S. postal worker was sentenced to 97 months in prison for his role in a stolen identity refund fraud conspiracy, announced Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Richard Zuckerman of the Justice Department's Tax Division and U.S. Attorney Charles E. Peeler for the Middle District of Georgia.

Harold Coley was convicted by a jury in Columbus, Georgia, in September of conspiring to file fraudulent refund claims, mail fraud, and embezzlement of mail. According to the evidence presented at trial, Coley worked as a mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service assigned to a postal route in Columbus. In 2012, Coley was recruited by co-conspirator Keisha Lanier to participate in a stolen identity tax refund scheme. Coley compiled addresses ostensibly related to streets on his route, including many addresses that did not exist or related to vacant buildings, and provided them to Lanier and others for the purpose of filing fraudulent tax returns with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Lanier obtained many of the stolen identities used for the returns from co-conspirator Tamika Floyd who worked for the Alabama Department of Public Health. The stolen identities primarily belonged to 16- and 17-year-olds.

Lanier and others directed the IRS to mail the fraudulent tax refund checks to the addresses Coley provided. In exchange for cash, Coley intercepted these checks and provided them to Lanier and others. Coley's co-conspirators directed over 1,600 refund checks totaling more than \$2.5 million to addresses on his postal route. Lanier and Floyd were convicted and previously sentenced to prison for their roles in the scheme.

In addition to the term of prison imposed, Chief U.S. District Judge Clay D. Land ordered Coley to serve three years of supervised release and pay \$901,351 in restitution to the IRS.

Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Zuckerman and U.S. Attorney Peeler commended special agents of IRS Criminal Investigation and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, who conducted the investigation, and Trial Attorneys Michael C. Boteler and William Montague of the Tax Division, who prosecuted the case, with assistance from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Georgia.

Additional information about the Tax Division's enforcement efforts can be found on the division's website.

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